



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

NUMBER:
FOR RELEASE:
<http://www.dhs.ca.gov>

06-45
IMMEDIATE

DATE: June 22, 2006
CONTACT: Ken August
or Lea Brooks
(916) 440-7660

LETTER SENT TO 323 MEDI-CAL BENEFICIARIES ABOUT POTENTIAL BREACH OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

SACRAMENTO – Letters are being sent to 323 Medi-Cal beneficiaries or their family members informing them that documents containing their personal information were found in the cubicle of a state employee who was not authorized to possess them, California Department of Health Services' (CDHS) Director Sandra Shewry announced today. An investigation is underway to determine if the personal information was disclosed inappropriately.

"We regret that personal information about these individuals may have been handled inappropriately," Shewry said. "We have no evidence that this incident has caused any harm to beneficiaries, but our investigation will continue until we can determine all of the facts."

On June 12, CDHS staff discovered a box of Medi-Cal forms from December 2005 in the cubicle of a CDHS employee who works in the same building as Medi-Cal staff, but in a different program. The claim forms contained the names, addresses, Social Security Numbers and prescriptions for beneficiaries or their family members.

The letter to individuals advises them that they can protect themselves from the possibility of identity theft by placing a fraud alert on their credit files and provides phone numbers for three credit reporting agencies: Experian (888-397-3742); Equifax (800-525-6285); and Trans Union (800-680-7289).

The letter also informs individuals that they may obtain one free copy of their credit report annually from the credit reporting agencies under federal law by calling (877) 322-8228. In addition, individuals may contact CDHS' Privacy Office hotline at (916) 445-4646 or log on to the California Office of Privacy Protection (COPP) Web site at www.privacy.ca.gov for more information about identity theft.

Last year, Governor Schwarzenegger signed legislation to combat identity theft, including banning "phishing," increasing the penalties of sending "spam," banning the use of equipment used to make fake documents, limiting inmates from having access to personal information of private individuals and other measures to increase privacy protection.

"Governor Schwarzenegger is committed to a no excuses, zero-tolerance policy regarding the release of sensitive, personal and confidential information," Shewry said.

The Governor also increased the budget for COPP by \$446,000 to help protect against identity theft, including conducting education and outreach efforts to consumers and organizations throughout California. In addition, the Governor has held two summits on identity theft solutions where representatives of law enforcement, the financial services industry, consumer groups and state and local government participated in education and training forums to fight the growing crime of identity theft.